

## PERFORMANCE MONITORING FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2018/19

REPORT OF: HEAD OF CORPORATE RESOURCES  
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Wards Affected: All  
Key Decision: No  
Report to: Cabinet  
15<sup>th</sup> October 2018

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### Purpose of Report

1. This report provides the Cabinet with information about the Council's performance for the first quarter from April to June 2018. It uses the bundle of performance indicators previously agreed for monitoring in 2018/19. The report also updates on progress with the Council's flagship activities, identified in the 2018/19 Corporate Plan.

### Summary

2. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 has been good overall, with most services performing at or close to target. In the small number of cases where service targets are not being fully met, the reasons for this are clearly understood and appropriate action is being taken





### Recommendations

3. **The Cabinet is requested to note the Council's performance and progress with flagship activities in the first quarter of the year and identify any areas where further reporting or information is required.**
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### Introduction

4. This report has previously been considered by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Issues raised by the Committee are set out in paragraphs 70 to 84.
5. One of the functions of the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth is to regularly monitor the performance of the Council's services, with a view to determining whether any additional scrutiny is required of services, particularly if performance is not of a satisfactory level. To do this, the Committee is provided with performance information on a quarterly basis.
6. Performance information is presented in a standard format across all services using the bundle of performance indicators agreed by the Committee for 2018/19. Performance measures have been developed to capture the core areas of each service. Where possible a target is set for the year against which performance is measured. Some performance measures do not have targets as these measures are "health checks" and for monitoring purposes only.





7. Performance information for the first quarter is provided at Appendix A. This is set out in tabular form using a traffic light system as explained below:

-  red – 10 percent or more off target
-  amber – slightly off target (less than 10 percent)
-  green – on or exceeding target
-  health check - indicator for information only

8. The Committee also has responsibility for monitoring progress with the flagship activities in the Corporate Plan for 2018/19. Progress in the first quarter is reported at Appendix B.

### Overall Performance

9. Performance has continued to be good across the Council in the first quarter, with a small number of exceptions of which more details are provided later in the report. The first quarter position in comparison with the previous financial year is summarised below:

Quarter 1	 Green	 Amber	 Red	 Health check	Total
2018/19	35 (85%)	2 (5%)	4 (10%)	15	56
2017/18	32 (76%)	4 (10%)	6 (14%)	14	56

10. Not all aspects of the Council's work can be measured by formal indicators and in some cases the Council has little or no influence over performance. Therefore this work is measured using health check indicators which are outlined in Appendix A. These are intended to provide Members with a holistic view of the Council's work.

### Performance meeting or exceeding targets (green)

11. Of the 41 indicators with targets, 35 met or exceeded their target. This has been achieved despite increased volumes of work in key areas. This section of the report provides more information about some of these performance achievements.

### Percentage of undisputed invoices paid within 10 days of receipt

12. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 was 98.3% paid within 10 days of receipt compared to the target of 95%, with 1,168 invoices received. Performance in the same quarter of last year was 98.6% out of the 1,326 invoices received paid within the target period. 100% of the undisputed invoices received in the first quarter of this year were paid within 30 days. This indicator continues to be a high priority for the Council in supporting small businesses where cash flow can be critical to their economic health.

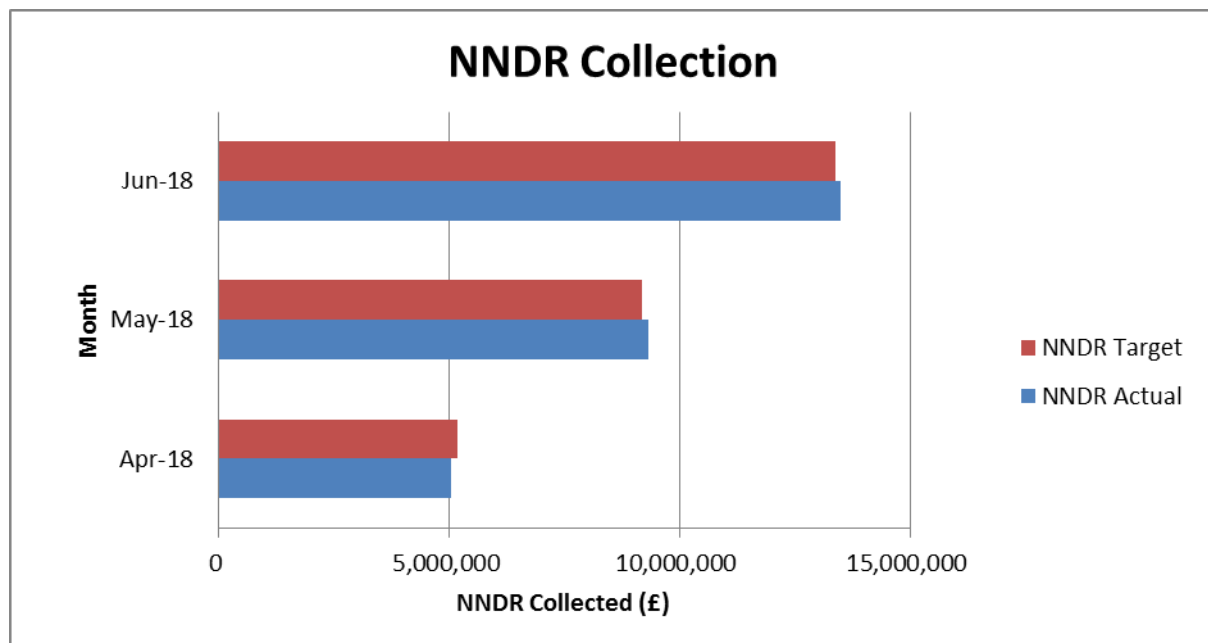
### Percentage of Council Tax collected

13. Council Tax collection was at the target level of 29.9% in the first quarter of the year with £31,008,057 collected. This compares to the first quarter of 2017/18 when the collection rate was 30% and £29,331,816 collected, although the figures are not directly comparable for the 2 years as more Council Taxpayers have elected to pay over 12 months rather than 10 in 2018/19 and we will not get a true comparison until the financial year end. However, in cash terms the amount of Council Tax collected has increased by almost £1.7 million. Figures have been released for the collection rates of other Sussex councils in 2017/18, which places Mid Sussex second from the best behind Horsham at 98.7% and in the top quartile nationally.

### Percentage of Non-Domestic Rates Collected

14. Collection of Non-Domestic Rates at the end of the first quarter had reached 30.3%, which was above the target of 28.1% and with £14,403,773 collected. This is an improvement on last year's collection rate at quarter 1 of 27.8%, when the amount collected was £12,700,366. Increased collection has been achieved through a focus on more proactive engagement with Business Ratepayers in enforcement and greater flexibility in making payment arrangements. As with Council Tax collected the figures are not directly comparable for the 2 years as more Business Ratepayers have elected to pay over 12 months rather than 10 in 2018/19 and we will not get a true comparison until the financial year end.

Figure 2 below shows monthly collection against targets for the first quarter (update chart)



### The percentage of rent due collected

15. In the first quarter of 2018/19 97% of the rent due was collected, which was at the target level. The amount of rent collected was £426,705. This compares to a collection rate of 99% in quarter 1 of last year, with £383,733 collected. This rent includes income from the Orchards Shopping Centre. One of the Council's flagship activities for 2018/19 is to introduce new management arrangements and improved facilities at the shopping centre and further information is included at Appendix B.

#### Percentage of complaints responded to within published deadlines

16. 100% of complaints were dealt with within the published deadlines. Generally the deadline is to acknowledge complaints within 5 working days and deal with them within a further 10 working days. There were 73 complaints received in the first quarter, compared to 65 in the first quarter of the previous year. The breakdown of the main services in receipt of complaints is as follows:
- Waste and Outdoor Services - 23
  - Landscapes – 10
  - Corporate Estates and Facilities - 7
  - Parking - 5
  - Revenues – 9
17. The Council has received the letter for 2017/18 from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding complaints. This shows 19 complaints considered by the Ombudsman, only one of which was upheld. The Annual Complaints Report will be considered by the Scrutiny Committee for Customer Services and Service Delivery on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

#### Average waiting time to speak to customer services officer

18. This refers to the average waiting time in seconds to speak to a customer services officer for all services in the Customer Contact Centre, including the switchboard. Calls are answered in the Contact Centre for nine Council services direct lines, including Building Control, Electoral Services, Parking Services and Waste Management. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 was 19 seconds compared to the target level of an average of 30 seconds. 21,379 calls were answered. This is an improvement on the first quarter of last year of an average of 30 seconds with 24,187 calls answered. In addition to telephone callers, the Customer Contact Centre dealt with 8,957 visitors to reception in the quarter.

#### Percentage of enquiries resolved at first point of contact and submission of e-forms

19. Accessing the service at first point of contact is measured through the proportion of the automatic forms available on our website successfully submitted and telephone enquiries resolved first time. Performance in the first quarter was 84% against the target of 75% and relates to analysis of forms only. Work is progressing to establish data to monitor telephone calls and resolution at first point of contact.
20. The number of e-forms submitted in the quarter was 6,913 compared to 7,912 last year. This is a reflection of more requests for services being dealt with directly through the Customer Relation Management System, rather than using an e-form. Widening the range of the Council's digital services is one of the Council's flagship activities for 2018/19 and further information is included at Appendix B.

### Monthly customer satisfaction scores and number of compliments received

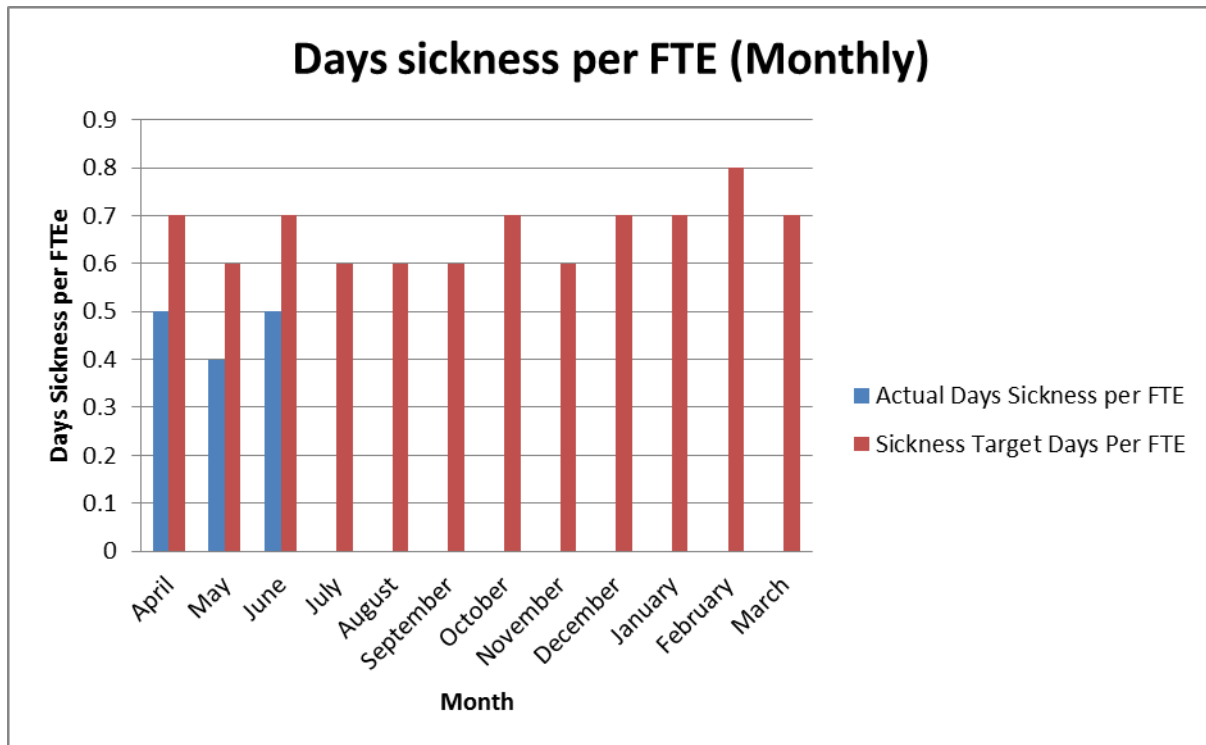
21. Customer satisfaction is being measured by calling back a sample of customers who had previously called the Contact Centre to gain their feedback. Feedback from those surveyed has been 100% positive. The customers surveyed had contacted the Council in connection to a wide range of services including waste, travellers, benefits, elections, switchboard, concessionary fares, parking, pest control, building control, taxi licensing and revenues.
22. In addition to surveys of customers, the number of compliments received is also an indicator of customer satisfaction. There were 104 compliments received in the first quarter. The main services in receipt of compliments were
  - Customer Services - 42
  - Development Management - 33
  - Waste and Outdoor Services - 6
  - Corporate Estates and Facilities - 3
  - Elections - 3

The latest "Make A Difference" award to recognise outstanding staff customer service was received by one of the Council's Civil Enforcement Officers for displaying compassion and empathy in assisting a customer who had suffered a recent bereavement.

### Staff sickness absence rate

23. This was 1.4 days per full-time equivalent (fte) member of staff in the first quarter compared to a target of 1.95 days. The number of medium and long-term absences has reduced over the quarter, although there were 2 ongoing absences being actively managed. This is an improvement on sickness absence in quarter 1 2017/18, which was 1.59 days per full-time equivalent member of staff. Improved performance is also the result of back to work interviews and promoting the availability of support to staff through measures such as the Employee Assistance Programme.

Figure 1 below shows the monthly figures for sickness rates against the target.



#### Staff turnover

24. Staff turnover in the first quarter of the year was 0.7% compared to the target of 3.7%. This is an improvement on the first quarter of 2017/18 when the turnover rate was 2.5%. Staff turnover can be affected by a number of factors, many of which are out of the control of the Council such as the local economy and job market. The 0.7% turnover rate refers to 2 voluntary leavers in the first quarter. One leaver related to career opportunities and the other took retirement.

#### The number of visits made to the Leisure Centres and Civic Halls

25. The number of visits to the Council's Leisure Centres and halls continues to exceed targets for the quarter, with 442,881 visits compared to the target of 428,822. Attendance figures for June were adversely affected by the closure of the Triangle Leisure Pools from 4 June to allow for the installation of new attractions. This reopened on 23<sup>rd</sup> July in time for the commencement of the school holidays. The delivery of further improvements to the leisure pool at the Triangle Leisure Centre is one of the Council's flagship activities for 2018/19 and further information is included at Appendix B.

#### Amount of waste per household which is disposed of in landfill sites (kilos)

26. This was 104 kgs in the first quarter of 2018/19 compared to the target of 107 kgs and a reduction on the figure for the first quarter of last year, which was 108 kgs per household. Waste minimisation is closely linked to the Council's efforts to increase the levels of recycling, which are referred to below.

#### Percentage of household waste sent for reuse, recycling and composting.

27. The first quarter performance was at the target level of 45.5%. This is an improvement on the figure for the first quarter of 2017/18, which was 43.8%. The target has been profiled to take account of the seasonal variation in the amount of green waste collected. The overall target for the year is 43.5%, profiled for 45.5% in the summer months and as low as 39% in the winter.
28. Improved performance is partly due to the increase in the amount of green waste that has been collected. The number of subscriptions to the green waste service has increased by 455 over the first quarter to 18,220. The Council's Recycling Quality project has also contributed to the increase in recycling through an educational programme aimed at encouraging residents to minimise their waste and recycle effectively. The recycling pilot with the British Heart Foundation for the kerbside collection of textiles and small electrical equipment is one of the Council's flagship activities. This commenced in November 2017, with progress reported at Appendix B.

#### The percentage of enquiries relating to enforcements within Parking Services which are dealt with within 10 days

29. The 100% target for the first quarter was achieved. The number of enquiries dealt with was 1,005 compared to 901 in the same quarter last year, an increase of 11.5%. Former staffing issues of sickness and recruitment have been dealt with and performance is well up on the figure for quarter 1 of last year of 65%.

#### Other Parking Services performance

30. Performance in repairing car parking machines within the target time of 2 days was at 99% against the target of 97%. One of the Council's flagship activities for 2018/19 is to introduce cashless payment options for parking, which has been completed (please see appendix B). During July, 5 existing pay and display machines were upgraded to accept card payments and 37 machines were replaced to accept cash and/or card payments.
31. With regard to the cancellation rate of penalty charge notices, this was 6% for the first quarter of 2018/19. There is an Enforcement Service Level Agreement in place with West Sussex County Council that sets a 9% cancellation rate target for mitigating circumstances.

#### Proportion of Environmental Health service requests which are actioned and resolved within 3 months of receipt

32. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 was 97% compared to the target of 96%. This represents 512 out of 528 service requests and is an improvement on the performance in the first quarter of last year was 91%, with 576 out of 633 service requests resolved within 3 months.

#### Environmental Health service requests that are responded to within five working days

33. Service requests responded to within 5 working days was 99% in the first quarter of 2018/19, compared to the target of 97% and relating to 1,050 service requests. This

compares to performance of 97% in the first quarter of last year when 1,106 service requests were received. This is a challenging target, especially in busy periods. Requests for service cover the range of Environmental Health activities, including licensing, housing standards, environmental protection and food hygiene. The Team are preparing for changes to regulations which will increase the number of premises to be licensed as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and under Animal Welfare regulations.

#### Number of health and wellbeing interventions

34. The wellbeing service supports and advises people who wish to make improvement to their lifestyle, such as losing weight, taking more exercise, improving their diet, reducing alcohol consumption or stopping smoking. The service delivered 630 interventions in the first quarter of 2018/19 against the target of 463. The main courses provided in the quarter included weight off workshops, back to exercise, the well balanced falls prevention programme, pre-diabetes courses and workplace health. The Wellbeing Team has launched a new GP practice based outreach service for 2018/19, which is one of the Council's flagship activities. Please see Appendix B for further information.
35. Of the people who responded to requests for feedback in quarter one, 85% of those assisted by the Wellbeing service reported a health improvement against a target of 80%. These calls are made 3 months after the intervention to monitor whether the intervention has led to a sustained improvement. The Wellbeing Team missed their 80% target in May. This primarily related to a pre-diabetes course held in February, where participants seemed to have considerable knowledge already of the information provided. Course content and referral pathways have been reviewed in response to this feedback.

#### Resolved anti-social behaviour cases as a percentage of those referred

36. This is new indicator for the committee to monitor from this year. Formerly just the number of cases was reported, but this new indicator seeks to provide a measure of how successful the Council has been in their resolution. For the first quarter of 2018/19 72% of the cases referred to the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Officer were resolved against the target of 60%. This relates to 7 cases raised, with 5 resolved/closed. The majority of these cases related to neighbour disputes or were noise related.

#### Closed cases of families worked with by the Early Intervention Family project where outcomes are met or partially met

37. This is another new indicator for monitoring this year and also seeks to provide a measure of the effectiveness of the actions taken, rather than just the number of cases. The Council has an Early Intervention Officer, funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner's Office, who works with troubled families. For the first quarter of the year the Early Intervention Officer closed 5 cases, all of which where the planned outcomes of the intervention were met or partially met. Two of these cases involved a transfer to a school based professional for continuing support. The Early Intervention Officer is currently working with a further 6 families.



#### Number of households accepted as homeless

38. At 9, the number accepted as homeless by the Council is better than the target for the first quarter of the year of 20. The long term expectation is that the numbers approaching the Council for advice and assistance will increase due to demand for affordable housing and the implications of welfare reforms. The team had 194 households approaching the Council with a housing enquiry in the first quarter of 2018/19, compared to 219 in the same quarter of 2017/18.
39. The Housing Needs Team are implementing the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act, which came into effect from April 2018. It is anticipated that this will increase the workload. The Act requires that all households who approach the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness, must have a full assessment and be provided with a written Personalised Housing Plan (PHP). The PHP must then be kept under review. There is a duty to work with all such households for a minimum of 56 days to try to either prevent or relieve their homelessness. This means that every application will require substantially more casework and most cases will require longer interventions, with additional paperwork.

#### Number of households living in temporary accommodation

40. The numbers in temporary accommodation stood at 48 at the end of June. This compares to 47 at the end of the first quarter of 2017/18. Overall, we are anticipating an increased need for the Council to make use of temporary accommodation. This is a reflection of factors previously reported to the Committee including the difficulties in accessing properties in the private rented sector and a lack of available Housing Association properties. The Homelessness Reduction Act has also led to an increase in the length of time that the Council has a duty to provide temporary accommodation for households in priority need.
41. Where the Council makes use of temporary accommodation, the aim is to ensure that households so placed are supported in their efforts to secure longer term housing to minimise the time they spend in temporary accommodation. The Housing Needs Team are using Homelessness Grant funding to employ a Temporary Accommodation and Homelessness Prevention Officer to assist with this. The average time that households are spending in temporary accommodation in quarter 1 was 34 weeks, compared to 38 weeks in the same quarter of 2017/18.
42. The Scrutiny Committee for Community, Housing and Planning considered a report on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2018 recommending to Cabinet that the Council provides its own temporary accommodation in Mid Sussex, thereby minimising the reliance on bed and breakfast and guest house accommodation. This was approved at the Cabinet meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2018, with funding provided for the purchase of up to 20 properties and the lease of up to 10 properties. Suitable properties are currently being sought.

#### Number of households assisted to access the private rented sector

43. Thirty five households were assisted to access the private rented sector in the first quarter of 2018/19 compared to the target of 19. The Housing Needs Team provides assistance to access private rented sector accommodation through initiatives such as the Rent in Advance and Deposit Guarantee Scheme, which helps those without sufficient funds to rent privately. Since April 2018, the Council also has a Private Tenancy Negotiation and Sustainment Officer in post, who will work with landlords to increase the supply of private rented properties available to households the Council are assisting.

#### Building Control site inspections carried out within 24 hours of the date requested

44. The Building Control Team achieved the target of 98% of site inspections carried out within 24 hours of the date requested in quarter one of 2018/19. This related to 2,051 site inspections an increase of 12% on the figure for the previous year of 1,828 inspections. Please see paragraph 54 for further information concerning this service.

#### Processing of planning applications

45. The speed of determining planning applications remains good, with targets exceeded for majors, minors and other planning applications. The number of applications processed in quarter 1 was 680, compared to 668 in the same period of 2017/18.
46. During the first quarter of the year, all 13 major planning applications received were processed within the target of 13 weeks (or within an agreed extension of time), so the target of 79% was exceeded. This compares to quarter one of 2017/18, when there were 16 major applications processed.
47. For processing minor applications, performance was at 99% compared to the target of 84%. This relates to 105 out of 106 minor applications processed within 8 weeks. This compares to quarter one of 2017/18, when there were 102 minor applications processed.
48. 347 out of 350 "other" applications were processed within 8 weeks, which represents performance of 99% against the target of 94%. "Other" planning applications refers mainly to residential development by householders. This compares to quarter 1 of 2017/18, when there were 327 minor applications processed.
49. One of the indicators that the Committee started to monitor in 2017/18 is the level of appeals allowed against the refusal of planning permission. Performance in the first quarter of this year was 14% against the target of 33%. This compares to 29% in 2017/18. The adoption of the District Plan and the identification of the 5 year land supply is changing the way that planning applications are determined and reducing the number of planning appeals allowed.
50. One of the Council's flagship indicators for 2018/19 is to use increased planning fees to further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning service to support economic growth and financial independence. Progress is reported at Appendix B.

#### Validation of planning applications within 5 working days

51. In order to support Development Management in meeting their targets for processing planning applications, the Council aims to validate planning applications within 5 working days of submission in 98% of cases. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 was above target at 99% and with 680 applications received.

#### The percentage of Local Authority Searches replied to within 5 working days

52. Performance in the first quarter of 2018/19 was at 100% compared to the target of 96%. This relates to 633 searches. Performance in the first quarter of 2017/18 was 97%, with 663 searches received. The reduction in searches is a reflection of the housing market. The Council's share of the searches market compared with the private sector companies has remained fairly constant.

#### **Performance slightly below target (amber)**

53. Two of the indicators fell only slightly below (within 10%) their targets in the first quarter of 2018/19. Information about these is set out in this section of the report.

#### The percentage of plans received by Building Control which are checked within 15 working days

54. Performance was at 80% for quarter one of 2018/19 compared to the target of 87%. This relates to 331 plans checked. This is an improvement on the first quarter of 2017/18, when performance was 75% with 353 plans checked. Of the applications that exceeded the target in quarter 1 of this year, 66% of these were assessed within 18 working days. Building Control has also placed an emphasis on carrying out site inspection within 24 hours, with inspections up 12% from the same period last year. A new Senior Building Control Officer starting in September which should contribute to an improvement in the plan checking indicator for quarter 2.

#### Accuracy in Benefit Assessments and Overpayment Error

55. One of the new indicators for monitoring by the Committee this year is the accuracy of assessment of benefit claims, which is key as we try to protect the Council from Housing Benefit subsidy loss. This is a reflection of the move away from the CenSus Partnership and the establishment of the Council's own Revenues and Benefits service with a greater emphasis on improving accuracy of assessment, rather than just the speed of processing. Performance in the first quarter was at 91.8% against the target of 97%. Accuracy of processing is being monitored against all benefit cases processed rather than just the ones selected for accuracy testing and is an emphasis for the training being provided for new staff. It is expected that this will improve once the Council's new Revenues and Benefits Team beds in.

56. Related to the accuracy of processing is the indicator for the level of overpayment error. This is important in preventing the Council losing Housing Benefit Subsidy from the Department of Works and Pensions. For the 2016/17 claim, the Council did not lose any subsidy and at the end of the first quarter overpayment error for the 2018/19 Subsidy Claim was well below the threshold of £79,000 at £37,466. The result of not losing annual subsidy also looks likely in 2017/18 for a second year running. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance will update Members verbally at the meeting on the final outcome.

**Performance not achieving targets (red)**

57. There were 4 performance indicators in the first quarter of 2018/19 that were 10% or more off target. These relate to the Council’s Benefits service.

Speed of processing new claims and change of circumstances for Housing and Council Tax Support Claims

58. At the end of August 2018, the total number of claimants was:

Housing Benefit Working Age	3,544
Housing Benefit Elderly	2,635
Total	6,179
Council Tax Support Working Age	3,058
Council Tax Support Elderly	2,485
Total	5,543

Universal Credit Claims (@June 2018 – the latest published data) 243

59. As reported previously, the Revenues and Benefits service has been going through a period of transition with the disaggregation of the CenSus Partnership and establishment of the Council’s own service. Official separation of the service from Horsham District Council took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018. Following this, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance has agreed to adopt new targets for 2018/19. These targets take into account the Department of Works and Pensions national average performance figures and reflect the new service’s emphasis on accuracy of processing to get the right benefit to the right person at the right time. The new targets are outlined below alongside the old targets for the service.

Performance Indicator	2017/18 Outturn	2017/18 Target	2018/19 Target
Average speed of processing new Housing benefit claims.	21 days	18 days	22 days
Average speed of processing Council Tax Support claims	24 days	20 days	22 days
Average speed of processing change of circumstances for Housing Benefit claims	8 days	7 days	9 days
Average speed of processing change of circumstances for Council Tax Support claims.	10 days	10 days	9 days

60. The Council has started to monitor from this year additional benefits indicators for accuracy of processing and the level of overpayments, which are referred to in paragraphs 55 to 56.
61. For new Housing Benefit Claims the average speed of processing in quarter one was 26 days compared to the target of 22 days, with 308 claims processed. For Council Tax Support claims the average was 27 days compared to the target of 22 days and with 356 claims processed.
62. For Housing Benefit changes of circumstances the average speed of processing was 13 days compared to the target of 9 days, with 5,483 changes processed. For Council Tax Support change of circumstances, performance was 12 days compared to the target of 9 days and with 4,538 changes processed.
63. Transitional arrangements have been implemented to ensure as far as possible "business as usual" while the Council puts in place a new management team and staff for the Revenues and Benefits service. Recruitment and training of the new team has been undertaken during July and August. Business as usual has been achieved with regard to the collection of Business Rates and Council Tax (see paragraphs 13 and 14), but benefits processing times were outside the targets in quarter 1.
64. A specific issue arising in the quarter which has affected Benefits processing performance was a problem with the Electronic Document Management System in May, which was totally unavailable for processing work for 5 days and led to a backlog of some 2,000 documents. It has taken some time to clear this backlog and processing times have shown some improvements in July, with change of circumstances for Council Tax Support claims at the target level of 9 days and for Housing Benefit at 10 days.
65. The change of circumstances targets for Housing Benefit also need to reflect that later in the year a large number of rent increase are processed within a day, so performance is well within target during February and March every year. This variance needs to be reflected in the profiling of the performance targets throughout the year.
66. A further issue facing the service has been the roll out of Universal Credit, which went live in Mid Sussex on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018. This has significant implications for Benefits administration, with fewer new claims and a significant increase in changes of circumstances, and provides for a single monthly payment to replace a number of other benefits and tax credits. The DWP reported that at the end of July and six weeks into implementation, 100% of payments in Mid Sussex have been made on time.

67. As reported previously, the Council's Benefits Team are being proactive in working with partner organisations to provide the necessary financial support and advice for people who are awarded Universal Credit. The Council is in receipt of a DWP Grant to provide Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support for those vulnerable people in receipt of Universal Credit. This has been allocated to Citizens Advice, with whom the Council has a partnership agreement for 2018/19, in order to provide extra training for their volunteers and to appoint specialist financial advisers. As at the end of July, there had been 14 referrals to the Personal Budgeting/Assisted Digital Support Service of which 12 were taken up. 9 were for Personal Budgeting Support and 3 for Assisted Digital Support.
68. A Universal Credit Learning Session for all Members took place on 10<sup>th</sup> July, to provide more information and identify the implications for the Council, Members and claimants. Officers will continue to keep Members fully updated on the roll out of Universal Credit, including the impact on our own services.

### **Progress to Flagship Activities for 2018/19**

69. Progress with the Council's flagship activities for 2018/19 is reported at Appendix B. All of the flagship activities are progressing well, indeed two of the activities have been completed by the end of the first quarter. These are the installation of cashless parking machines across the three towns and the achievement of the Green Flag award for St John's Park, Burgess Hill.

### **Consideration of the Performance Report by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader, Resources and Economic Growth at its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018.**

70. The Business Unit Leader for Revenues & Benefits provided a verbal update to the Committee. Since the dissolution of the CenSus Revenues and Benefits Partnership the Mid Sussex team had been restructured. This made the positive performance of Council Tax and NNDR collection rates even more remarkable. August figures showed a greatly improved performance for processing of new benefit claims and changes of circumstances. This will be reported to this Committee at the next meeting on 14 November 2018.
71. With regard to the change to the targets in 2018/19 for Benefits processing, the Business Unit Leader for Revenues & Benefits stated that there was a greater emphasis on accuracy to protect the Council from future housing benefit subsidy loss. Of equal importance was ensuring the Council gets the right benefit to the right person at the right time. The Committee queried whether 22 days was too long to get benefits to a vulnerable person. The Business Unit Leader for Revenues & Benefits stated that the time starts from initial contact and due to the complexity of Housing Benefit, often the applicant doesn't initially provide all of the information required. Accuracy was also very important and once these targets are being consistently met, the team will address improving speed.
72. It was noted by Committee that there was an inaccuracy in the total figure for Housing Benefit working age and elderly claimants, provided in section 58 of the report. This figure has since been amended.

73. The Committee queried the Council's use of Enforcement Agents to collect unpaid fees. The Business Unit Leader for Revenues & Benefits confirmed that the Council only uses Enforcement Agents as a last resort after all other options have been exhausted, including support from Citizens Advice. The approach is 'firm but fair'.
74. The Business Unit Leader for Revenues & Benefits said that the introduction of Universal Credit on 6 June had gone well, with the team working closely with the local job centres and Citizens Advice Service. Also the DWP has announced new arrangements for Citizens Advice to provide Support (Personal Budgeting Support and Assisted Digital Support).
75. The Committee observed that the report was very positive and they were confident that the Revenues & Benefits service was finally making the necessary improvements after a long period of uncertainty. They recognised that the dissolution of the CenSus Partnership and also losing the Document Imaging System for 5 days in May had been significant factors in performance so it was agreed were performance was well below target future reports would include a median as well as an average figure for claims processing.
76. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance confirmed that the 2017/18 Subsidy Claim is being finalised and it is anticipated that the Council will avoid the loss of any subsidy through overpayment error for the second year in a row.
77. The Committee commented that despite the significant volume of work carried across the Council, for example collecting refuse bins, that only a small number of complaints are received. This is testament to the good work that is carried out by Officers and Contractors.
78. The Assistant Chief Executive updated the Committee on work being carried out to address homelessness. This continues to be a difficult area to predict and address because it is a demand led service. The Housing Needs Team are getting to grips with two specific work streams, firstly; fulfilling the new responsibilities under the Homelessness Reduction Act which sees our duty extend from 28 to 56 days and an obligation to do more work to prevent homelessness. 'New Burden' funding from the Government will be used to address this, including enhancing relationships with key partners such as Citizens Advice. Secondly, bringing to fruition the delivery and management of temporary accommodation, something the Council hasn't done since the 1980's. This will require robust planning and resourcing and it is anticipated that an additional permanent member of staff will be needed, taking on board the Committee's observation that the trend for temporary staffing doesn't always provide the necessary resilience for providing services to the most vulnerable.
79. A Member noted the reduction in the planning appeal rate and noted the role of the District Plan in this. They suggested that the Council should produce a press release to publicise the impact of the District Plan. The Leader confirmed he agreed and said he would discuss with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing.
80. The Head of Regulatory Services confirmed that an additional member of staff has been recruited to deal with the additional number of Homes in Multiple Occupation arising from the new statutory definition. The cost of this post is offset in part by the fees charged.

81. The Business Unit Leader for Community Services Policy & Performance explained that the Make a Difference Awards are made quarterly and decided upon by a Panel, following nomination by staff or members of the public. These can be for a Person or Team that has provided exceptional service. Awards are made by the Cabinet Member for Customer Services.
82. Concern was expressed that the thematic quarterly Health & Wellbeing Network meetings which provide excellent networking opportunities with third sector organisations and statutory providers were being poorly attended by Members. The Leader agreed to raise with all Members and encourage attendance. It was also noted that the Wellbeing Service continues to provide an invaluable service to the community.
83. The Committee also questioned if the target for antisocial behaviour resolution was too low. The Business Unit Leader for Community Services, Policy & Performance explained that this was the first year that the service was measuring the number of cases resolved rather than simply volume of cases. This year's data will be used to inform the benchmark for 2019/20 and will adjust as necessary to ensure future targets are challenging and realistic.
84. Progress with the flagship activities was discussed and the Committee noted that seven of these were linked to the Deputy Leader with other Cabinet Members not having any and whether this was a disproportionate workload. The Deputy Leader reassured the committee that this wasn't an issue and said that two of the projects may actually sit within other portfolios. It was agreed that this will be looked at and confirmed.

### **Conclusions**

85. The Council's services continued to perform well in the first Quarter of 2018/19 despite increases in workload in many services areas. Where performance is below target, corrective action aimed at improvement has been planned and is being delivered. Good progress has also been made with the flagship activities for 2018/19.

### **Risk Management Implications**

86. There are no risk management implications associated with this report. Performance across the Council was seen as a strategic risk in the past but the Council has a proven track record in performance management and it is no longer seen as a risk.

### **Equalities Implications**

87. There are no direct equality implications contained within this report. Equality impact assessments are undertaken within individual services.

### **Financial Implications**

88. There are no direct financial implications contained within this report.



**Background papers**

None.