

Agenda Item	13
Report No	RES/21/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resources Committee

Date: 23 May 2019

Report Title: **Corporate Resources Service - Quarterly Performance Report**

Report By: Depute Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Resources

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides performance information against the Accounts Commission's Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) together with key performance measures as at 31 March 2019.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

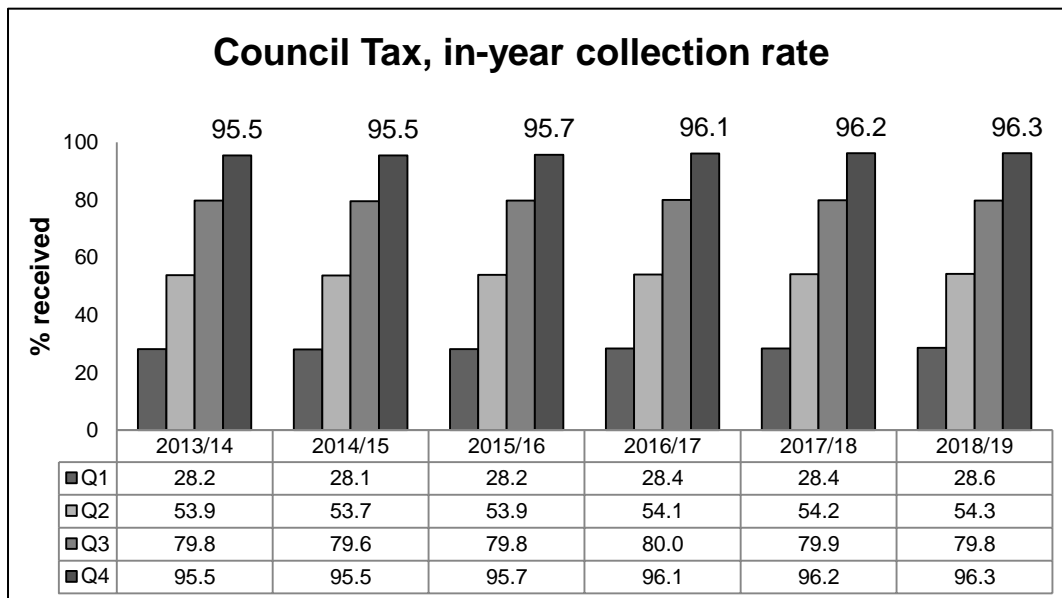
- i. consider these statutory and key performance indicators.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This report includes performance against the Accounts Commission’s Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) together with key performance measures.
- 3.2 Current year figures are compared with those from the corresponding period in the previous financial year where these are available. In addition, figures from previous years are included where appropriate so that trends may be identified.
- 3.3 Where definitions have changed, direct comparisons can only be made within the time period to which that definition has applied.
- 3.4 Reports will continue to be brought to Committee on these performance indicators on a quarterly basis so that trends can be monitored.
- 3.5 A list of the current SPIs for the Corporate Resources Service is attached as **Appendix 1**.

4.1 Council Tax In-Year Collection Rate

4.1.1

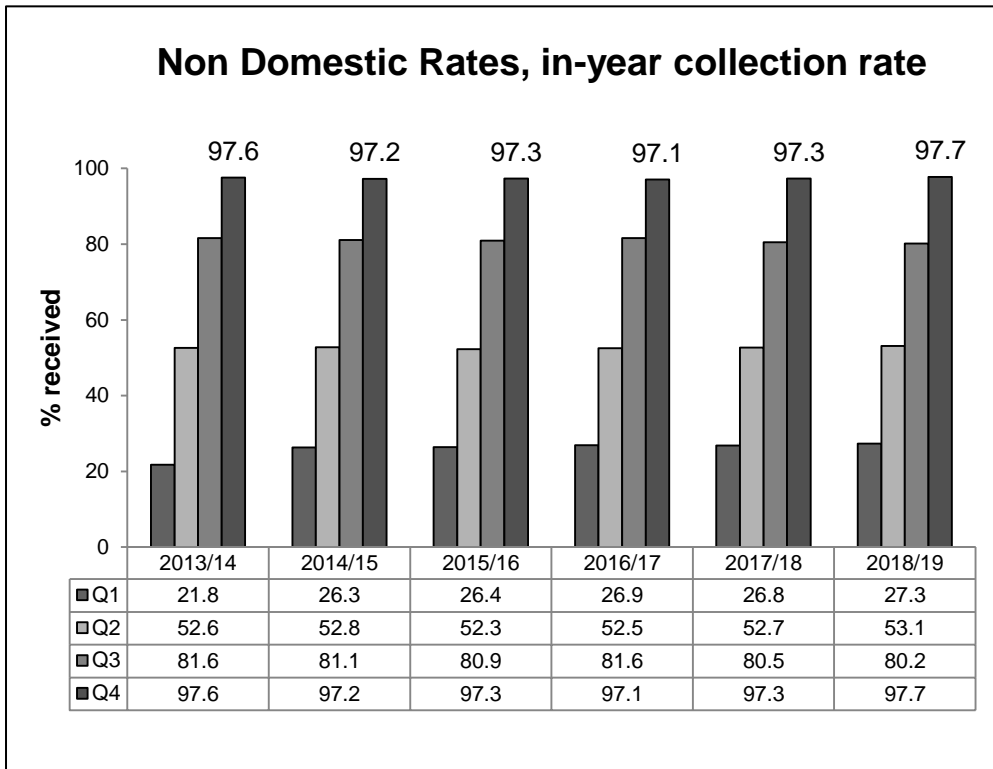


4.1.2 Council Tax in-year collection rate is 96.3%, which continues the positive trend in collection levels since 2014. Indeed, at 96.3% is the highest in-year collection achieved. The improvements are mainly attributable to ongoing improvement in business processes and resource management. Members are reminded that as reported to this Committee on 29 August 2018, costs have reduced by nearly 40% from 2014 to 2018. For example, the cost of Council Tax collection in 2017/18 was £650k less compared to 2013/14. Final cost figures for 2018/19 will be known as the final accounts process draws to a close.

4.1.3 Direct debits now make up 71.6% of bill payment representing 83.6% of receipts. Increased Direct Debit take-up supports collections performance and reduces bank charges, enabling financial savings to be made.

4.2 Non Domestic Rates in-Year Collection Rate

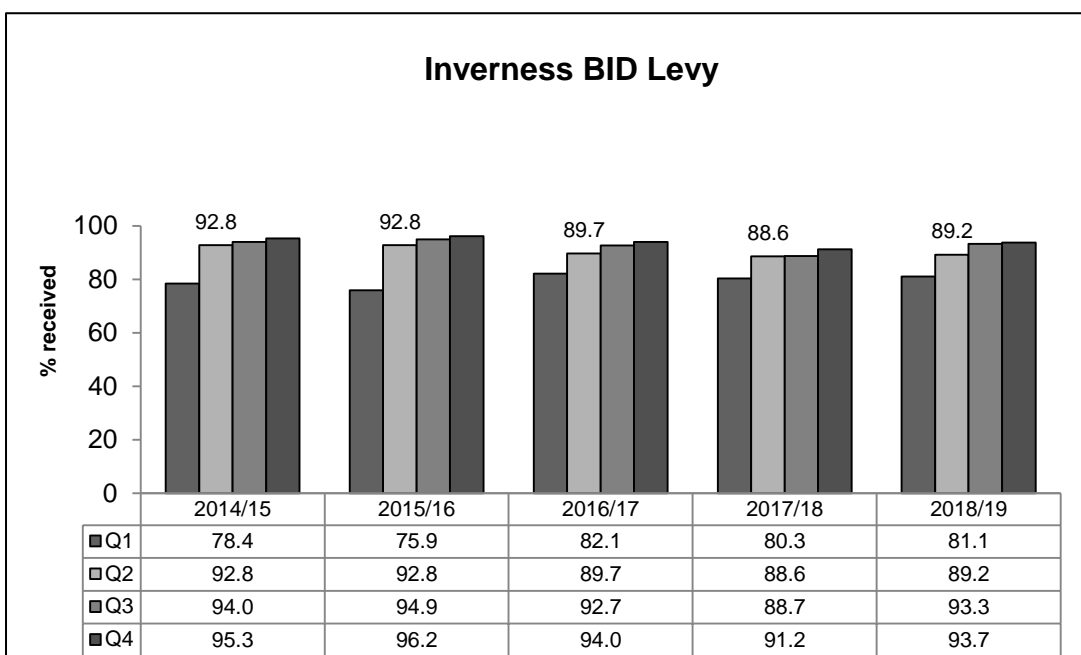
4.2.1



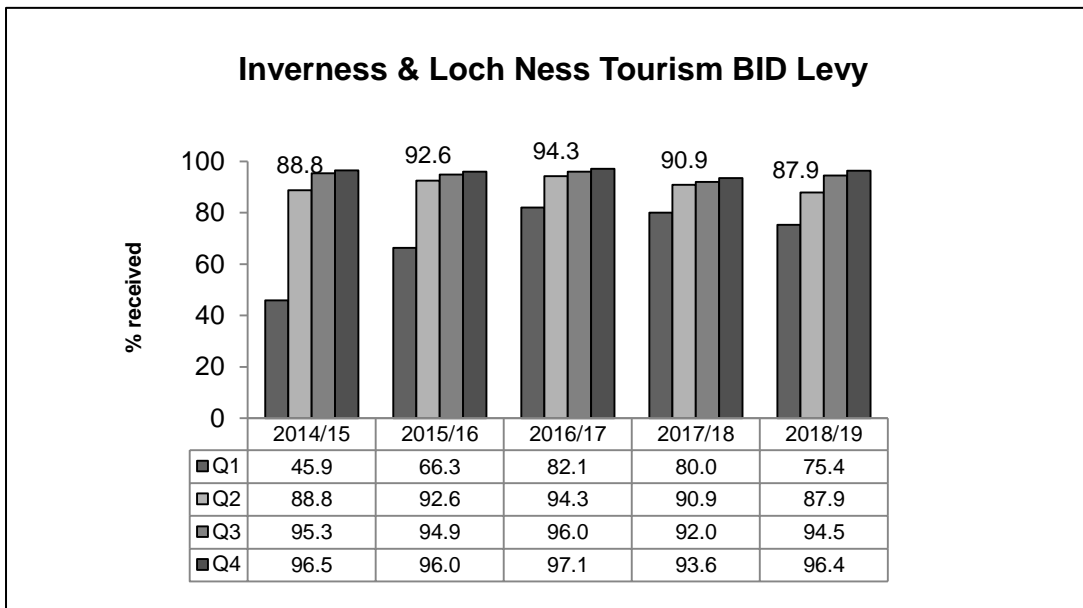
4.2.2 The NDR in-year collection rate is 97.7% which compares favourably to prior year performance of 97.3%. Indeed, at 97.7% is the highest in-year collection achieved. The Council continues to use all relevant measures available under the Rating regime to assist local businesses including encouraging payment by monthly instalments and directing businesses to available rate relief schemes such as the Small Business Bonus Scheme and Transitional Relief (for 18/19).

4.3 Business Improvement District (BID) Levies

4.3.1



4.3.2



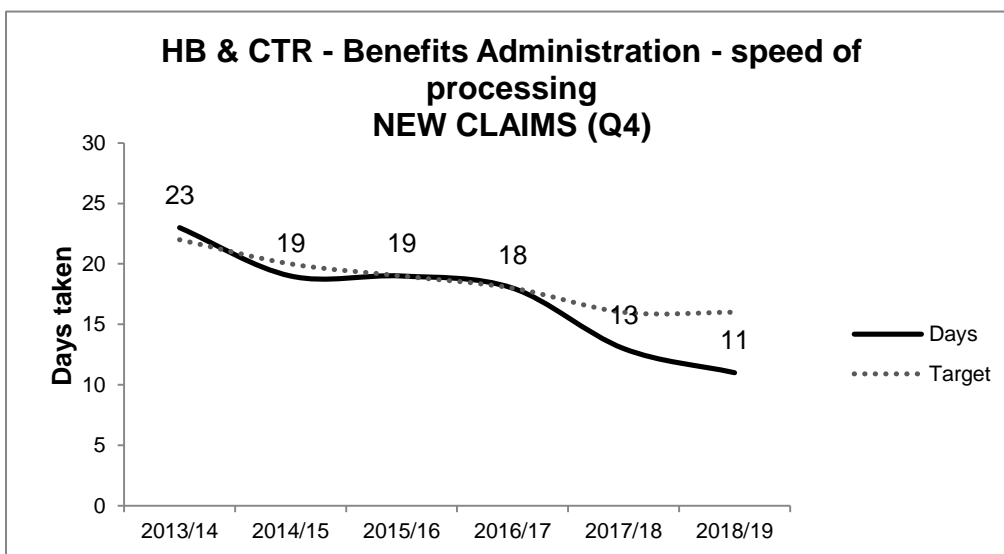
4.3.3 Collections for the Inverness BID and Inverness & Loch Ness Tourism BID report a positive improvement compared to prior year.

4.3.4 The collection rate for the Inverness BID levy was 93.7% compared to 91.2% prior year. The collection rate for the Inverness & Loch Ness Tourism BID levy was 96.4% compared to 93.6% prior year.

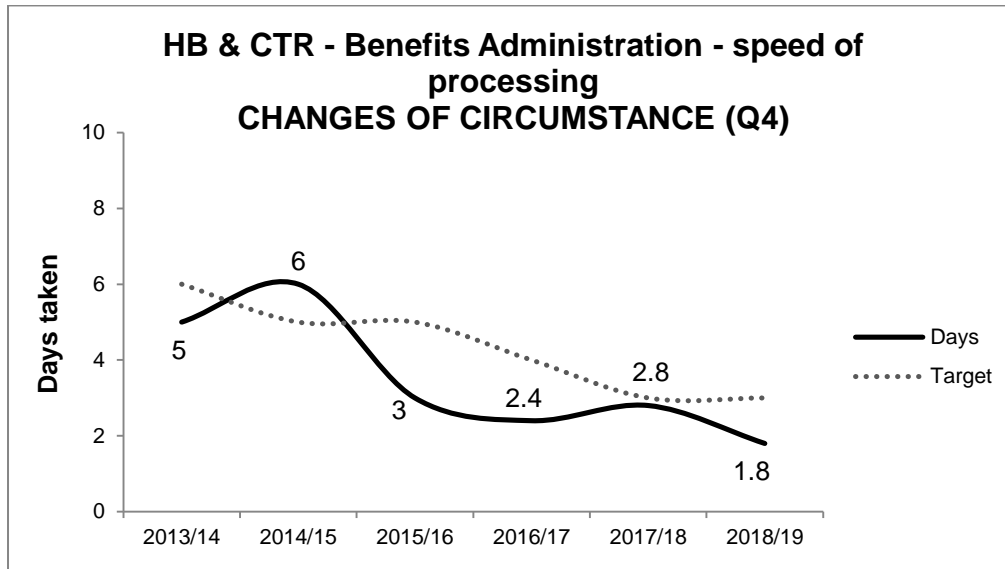
4.3.5 Bills were also issued in October 2018 for the recently established Nairn Business Improvement District – **Nairn Connects**. As at 31 March 2019 the collection rate was 82.2% for this BID collection levy (December 2018 was 57.0%). As with the 2 other BIDS, the Council recovers in full collection & administration costs.

4.4 Housing Benefit & Council Tax Reduction Benefits Administration - Speed of processing (days)

4.4.1



4.4.2



4.4.3 These indicators reflect the Council’s ability to process work as quickly as possible to ensure applicants receive their entitlement on time and at the correct rate.

4.4.4 In Q4, the average processing speed for new claims was 11 days and 1.8 days for changes of circumstance, both of which are the best performance levels we have achieved. As reported earlier at 4.1.2 and to this Committee on 29 August 2018, benefit service costs have reduced by more than 40% from 2014 to 2018. For example, the cost of benefits administration in 2017/18 was £1.29m less compared to 2013/14. Final cost figures for 2018/19 will be known as the final accounts process draws to a close.

4.4.5 Prompt processing times for New Claims and Change in Circumstances assists customers in being advised of the outcome of a new claim/ change in their circumstances as quickly as possible.

4.4.6 This also helps collection levels and supports the Housing Benefit budget and maximises Department for Work and Pensions subsidy as discussed earlier in this agenda within the “Corporate Resources Service and Welfare Budget” report.

4.5 Welfare Support

4.5.1

Financial benefit to the customer from advice given (£000) (backdated and annualised)						
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
1 Apr–31 March	1,635	3,975	4,015	4,651	6,024	6,188

4.5.2 Welfare Support (formerly Income Maximisation) continues to support customers and maximising benefits awards. For Q4 2018/19, 307 customers received additional financial gain totalling £1.669m. Of this, £467k relates to back-dated awards and £1.2m to the annualised weekly gain (i.e. the weekly gain multiplied by 52 weeks).

4.5.3 During 18/19 1,252 customers were supported achieving £6.189m financial gain comprising:

- £1.645m backdated awards (with the average backdated award per customer = £1,313.89)

- £4.544m annualised weekly gains (i.e. the weekly benefit gain multiplied by 52 weeks with the average weekly benefit gained per customer = £69.79)

4.5.4 This success has been delivered during significant welfare reform. Staff continue to provide claimant support at benefit tribunals and to help mitigate some of the impacts of Universal Credit Full Service throughout Highland. Existing ways of working continue to be challenged looking to identify areas where performance and efficiency can be increased and customer service improved. This has included co-location with other Council Services and partners such as the DWP.

4.6 TalentLink (Recruitment)

4.6.1 The Council uses CoSLA's on-line recruitment system called *TalentLink*. The system enables applicants to apply for positions online, and allow Council Managers to complete the recruitment process electronically.

4.6.2

TalentLink	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19 Q1	18/19 Q2	18/19 Q3	18/19 Q4	18/19
Number of posts advertised	2,403	1,914	1,947	503	404	145	206	1,258
% of posts advertised on time	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number (& %) of electronic applications	15,217 95.9%	14,427 95.3%	17,206 97.5%	4,836 98.2%	3,337 96.4%	1559 97.1%	1312 95.7%	11,044 97.2%
% of paper applications processed within 2 working days	100%	99.3%	100%	100%	100%	97.9%	100%	99.7%

4.6.3 There were 1,371 applications received during Q4; 1,312 (95.7%) were received in electronic format, with all paper applications processed within 2 working days. This brings the annual figure to 11,359 applications in 2018/19, with 97.2% received electronically and of those on paper, all but one (99.7%) were processed within 2 days.

4.6.4 The 206 posts advertised in Q4 represent 163 FTE (full-time equivalent). Of these, 38 FTE are fixed-term posts. Nearly half (49%) of the FTE for the permanent posts were in Care & Learning.

4.6.5 Receiving applications electronically provides numerous benefits including significant reductions in paper (and photocopying), increased information security and reduced filing space. Additionally managers are able to access applications in real time, reducing delays and supporting a consistent and auditable approach to the recruitment process. In terms of paper reductions, the annual equivalent exceeds 250,000 pages with a consumables saving of approximately £5k per annum.

4.7 Single Grant Applications (SGAs)

4.7.1 Business Support provides support to a number of Council staff such as Ward Managers in the administrative process of SGAs. The role is primarily logging SGAs (onto SharePoint), issuing an acknowledgment to customers and distribution of the SGAs to relevant staff.

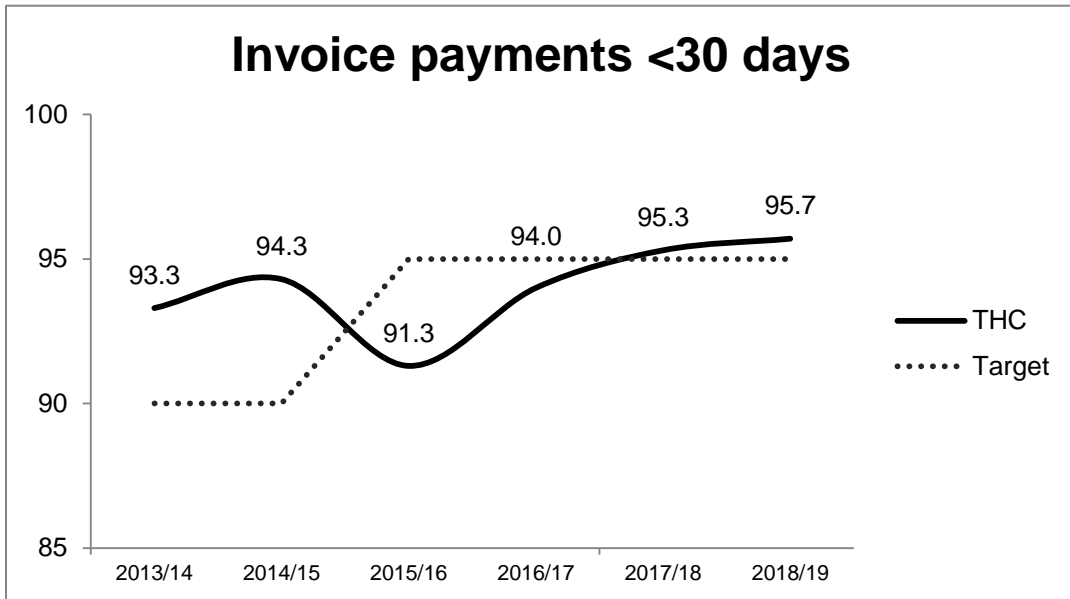
4.7.2 199 Single grant applications were received in Q4, and 99.9% of these processed within 5 days. This brings the annual performance 97.9%.

4.7.3

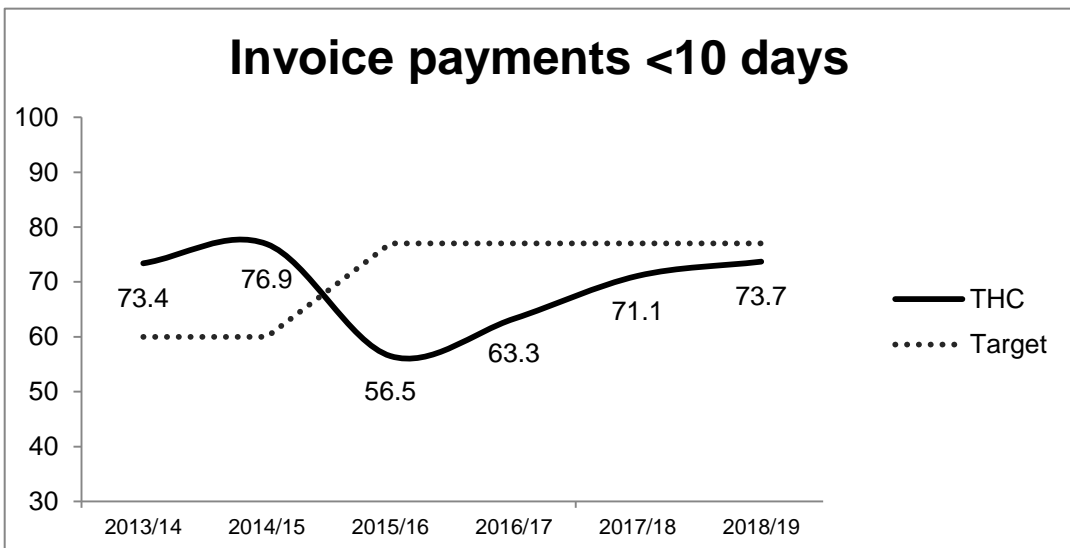
Single Grant Applications	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Percentage logged, acknowledged & distributed within 5 days	97.9%	98.3%	99.2%	97.9%

4.8 Payment of Invoices

4.8.1



4.8.2



4.8.3 These indicators measure the efficiency of the Council in paying invoices. They look at the number of invoices paid within 10 days and 30 days of receipt, as a percentage of all invoices paid. Performance at Service level is detailed in **Appendix 2**.

4.8.4 Performance continues to be positive with invoices processed within 30 days improving to 95.7% compared to 95.3% prior year. At 73.7%, invoices processed within 10 days also shows an improvement compared to prior year of 71.1%.

4.8.5 In Q4 for example, were the invoices currently taking 11-13 days paid within 10 days, performance within 10 days would be improved by over 6% (80.5% compared to 74.1%). The reduction in processing performance in 15/16 was primarily attributable to the implementation of a new financial system delivering significant annual savings.

4.8.6 As reported to previous Committees, Corporate Resources Service staff continues to review all processes looking to deliver improvements wherever possible including the speed of information coming from Services to enable invoices to be processed.

4.9 Attendance Management

4.9.1

	17/18		18/19			
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Corporate Resources	1.8	2.4	1.7	1.9	1.7	2.1
Highland Council (non-teaching)	2.6	3.1	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.1

4.9.2 In Q4, the average number of days lost per employee within the Corporate Resources Service was 2.1 days. Performance remains better than the Highland Council non-teaching average of 3.1 days.

4.9.3 The service continues to keep staff absence as low as possible and following the Council's HR policies and guidance, implementing measures such as "return to work" interviews and discussions with staff.

5.0 Implications

5.1 Resource – the resource implications are detailed within the report.

Legal – there are no legal implications arising from this report.

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – the prompt processing of benefit claims and the proactive support to customers from Welfare Support will help to mitigate some of the poverty challenges.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever – there are no climate change / carbon clever implications arising from this report.

Risk – there are no risk implications arising from this report.

Gaelic – there are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

Designation: Depute Chief Executive & Director of Corporate Resources

Date: 7 May 2019

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Corporate Resources Service

Background Papers: None

APPENDIX 1

Statutory Performance Indicators	Report ref:	Frequency
The average number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence for: b) All other local government employees	4.9	Quarterly
The gross administration cost per benefits case		Annual
The cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling		Annual
Current year income from Council Tax: a) The income due from Council Tax for the year, net of relief and rebates b) The percentage of a) that was received during the year	4.1	Quarterly
The number of invoices paid within 30 calendar days of receipt as a percentage of all invoices paid	4.8	Quarterly
The number of invoices paid within 10 calendar days of receipt as a percentage of all invoices paid	4.8	Quarterly
Internal Audit - cost of audit/£1m net expenditure		Annual
Insurance - cost/claim processed		Annual
Creditors - unit cost/creditor invoice issued		Annual
Payroll - cost/payslip produced		Annual
Pensions - cost per member		Annual
Cost of Accounting % Net Rev Budget + HRA		Annual
Cost of completing the Annual Accounts		Annual
Cost NDR collection/chargeable property		Annual
% NDR collected by year end	4.2	Quarterly
Cost sundry debtors/debtors account issued		Annual
% income sundry debtors collected during year		Annual
Cost Corporate Finance % Net Revenue Budget		Annual
Cost Procurement section % Net Revenue Budget		Annual

Other performance measures	Report ref:	Frequency
Processing time benefit – new claims (average days)	4.4	Quarterly
Processing time benefit – change in circs (average days)	4.4	Quarterly
Welfare Support	4.5	Quarterly
Business Improvement District (BID) Levy	4.3	Quarterly
Business Support - Talentlink	4.6	Quarterly
Business Support – Single Grant Applications	4.7	Quarterly

APPENDIX 2

Invoice Payments <30 days							
DIRECTORATE	TARGET 18/19	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Care & Learning	95%		93.7	89.7	94.5	94.9	93.8
<i>Corporate Development</i>			93.6	93.1	92.8	94.5	
Chief Executive's			95.4	96.1	94.1	92.3	94.8
Community Services			91.8	92.9	93.1	95.4	97.0
Development & Infrastructure			90.6	88.4	91.7	95.4	96.7
<i>Finance</i>			99.0	96.9	98.1	98.9	
Corporate Resources							97.5
Highland Council			93.3	94.3	91.3	94.0	95.3

Invoice Payments <10 days							
DIRECTORATE	TARGET 18/19	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19
Care & Learning	77%		67.4	49.2	57.6	65.7	66.1
<i>Corporate Development</i>			72.0	71.3	75.1	78.2	
Chief Executive's			84.0	75.2	76.7	72.5	77.3
Community Services			75.6	62.8	65.8	76.4	81.4
Development & Infrastructure			85.0	51.0	55.8	65.3	67.2
<i>Finance</i>			91.0	76.8	91.4	83.0	
Corporate Resources							77.7
Highland Council			73.4	76.9	56.5	63.3	71.1